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THE HIGHER PATRIOTISM

BY JOHN GRIER HIBBEN

WHEN we in America speak of the love which we entertain for our country, it is well for us to recall the various phases of changing significance through which these words—"our country"—have passed during the last one hundred and fifty years of our history. When our fathers referred in loyal devotion to "our country" they had in mind not only the colonies on our Atlantic shore, but the mother country of England as well. Loyalty was naturally British, for America then belonged to Great Britain by right of conquest and possession. But it was not possible to hold our country within the limits of this original sovereignty. Through the successful struggle for independence a later generation of our fathers claimed the land bought and sealed by their blood as belonging exclusively to themselves and their children for all time. The former ideas of patriotism necessarily experienced a like revolution and were translated into terms appropriate to a new environment and a new interpretation of loyalty. The sons of the English, Scotch, and Dutch settlers and soldiers of the Revolution could proudly say, "This is *our* country." And yet even as they said this our nation was passing beyond their exclusive control. For suddenly men of alien races and alien tongues were sharing our birthright with us. This was not a revolution, but an evolution, natural, inevitable. It was not only the treasures hidden beneath the soil, and the wealth of the very soil itself, which lured these strangers to our shores, but far more the spirit of liberty and the chance of a new life in a new world.

And to-day not only we of the old British stock, but also the representatives of every race and nationality the world over, have the like privilege of taking the words "our country" upon their lips with the same enthusiasm of sincere and loyal patriotic devotion. We are a composite people. The ends of the earth meet in us. Consequently, the idea of patriotism

in our land cannot be racial or narrowly confined. And particularly it should not be without a sympathetic understanding of the needs of humanity. For while we are merely a part of the world, yet the whole world is in a certain sense a part of us. No corner of the earth, however remote, is without a representative somewhere among our people. The better we understand ourselves, the better shall we be able to understand the world at large. Consequently, our sympathies at least must be cosmopolitan. For us, particularly, it is natural that the love of country should find its complementary expression in the love of humanity.

Madame de Staël has said that "the patriotism of nations ought to be selfish." This must be interpreted, however, within certain limits. And it is the office of the higher patriotism to define and to transcend these limits. As no individual dare live unto himself, so also no nation dare live unto itself; it fails to fulfil its destiny if it is wholly self-centered and self-absorbed. But is it natural to love a stranger and an alien as we love our own kin and kind? Most assuredly it is, if we are discriminating as regards the sense in which we use the word "love." The word indeed has two quite distinct meanings. There is the love which is identified with affection—that affection which is bred of intimate intercourse and community of interests and desires. It is the love we cherish for the inner circle of family and friends. There is, however, another sense in which we use the term "love." It is in this sense that we are exhorted to love our neighbor as ourselves—nay, to love even our enemies. This type of love is quite another matter. It signifies a certain attitude toward all mankind, showing itself in a twofold manner in a disposition to respect every man's rights and a willingness to minister to his needs. "To do justice, to love mercy": these are the cardinal doctrines both of religion and morality, according to the old Hebrew prophet. It is easier to obey the first than the second of these commands. It is easier to respond to the appeal—especially when it comes to us at a time of calamity and wide-spread suffering—to love those in distress and to give them true sympathy and substantial aid, than it is to maintain both the spirit and the letter of justice in our dealings with those who are not in distress and who neither ask nor need help of us. Nevertheless, the love of our fellow-men is only a name, and therefore a mockery, unless it recognizes and respects the law of just and fair dealing not only between man and man, but between nation and nation as well. It is of little avail to show mercy to

those from whom we have withheld justice. Compensation for injury does not absolve us from the guilt of inflicting the injury. Love for the peoples of other lands beyond our borders with whom we may be brought into more or less intimate relations means, primarily and essentially, a disposition to deal fairly with the alien nation irrespective of the circumstance as to whether that nation is weaker or stronger than ours.

We need to-day particularly clear thinking and strong conviction upon this fundamental principle of conduct. This truth requires no explanation. It does not wait upon proof. It needs only to be emphasized and driven home so that it may become not only a matter of individual appropriation, but also a part of patriotic tradition. This is the time to reassert our political convictions as regards the relations of our country to all peoples of the earth. We should recognize the moral foundations upon which a nation must rest if its stability is to remain secure.

Where do we find the clearest expression of the moral worth and moral grandeur of this idea of justice both individual and national? Where do we find the most profound recognition of the sovereign nature of the law of justice? Without question, in Germany. It is not von Treitschke, nor Nietzsche, nor Bernhardt who speaks for Germany or who represents the German tradition. They may represent the spirit of their age, but it is an age that is passing. It is Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher and prophet, who expresses Germany's most profound thought in words which have an eternal significance. I call him a prophet because he speaks for his people, and indeed for other peoples also and for all times; his is a universal language. His philosophy is rigorous, uncompromising in its insistence upon a profound reverence for the law of justice and an obedient surrender to its commands. And this law finds expression with him in two fundamental moral maxims. First, always act as you would wish to if that action were to become a universal law. Second, always treat man as an end in himself, and never merely as a means to an end. That is, our individual conduct must be judged by a standard which admits of universal application. Our convenience, or necessity, or desire, or indeed any particular consideration whatsoever, cannot be weighed against the universal demands of the law of right. Moral law admits of no particular interpretation. What is right for one is right for all. What is duty for one is duty for all.

The second maxim insists upon the supreme consideration which is due the rights of human personality. Man as such is to be regarded as an end in himself. He is not a thing, but a person, and to treat him as a person is the first law of all human relationship. Kant, moreover, believed that these doctrines were applicable to nations as well as to individuals. He dreamed his dream of all the nations of the earth living together in a federation of mutual respect and friendly co-operation, a dream of universal peace. One day it may be realized. Whatever his dream may be, his teaching as to individual and national duty is clear, and with the voice of a prophet he spoke to the German people nearly a century and a half ago, and he is speaking to Germany again to-day, and, indeed, to all nations of the earth, for his message is not for any particular land or any particular time, but for every age and every people. And we do well to give heed to his message. There is always danger of injustice through a false idea of patriotism. It is a fundamental moral fallacy that any act whatsoever, done as a supposed service to one's country, is thereby self-justified. We dare not disregard the rights of others for the sake of a nation's glory. The strong nation dare not exploit the weaker for its own advantage either in war or in peace. A nation, as an individual, has a personality which must be respected. This marks the limit of national self-assertion and self-aggrandizement. Necessity is no excuse for injustice. The plea of necessity seeks to particularize the universal law of right. Kant's voice is raised in protest against such procedure. The German tradition of moral integrity and honor is against it. As Kant has insisted, there is only one necessity in the whole world, and that is the necessity of obeying the law of right. Germany of the past appeals to Germany of the present in words which have been so often heard in the philosophical discussions of the last century—"Back to Kant." They apply as well to the superficial political philosophy of the day. I profoundly believe that the most significant result of the present European conflict will be to establish one and the same ethical standard alike for nations as for individuals, so that national pledges will be jealously guarded from reproach and shame. The common sense and the common conscience of the people will demand this.

The world has been very slow in recognizing the moral responsibility of a nation. Indeed, in the evolution of our ethical concepts there are three distinct stages which mark the progress of humanity toward a more adequate realization of the funda-

mental principles of morality. The first is the stage of individual self-realization in which the chief concern of life seems to center in maintaining the existence of the individual and promoting his self-seeking desires. The second stage marks the awakening of the social conscience, where one comes to recognize his duties to his fellows and the obligation which he is under to preserve their lives and to promote their welfare as well as his own. In the third stage there is the recognition not merely of the obligation which the individual owes to others, but also the obligation which the social group itself, whether the clan or the tribe or the nation, owes to other social groups with which it comes in contact. This third stage is in the process of realization. It has not as yet been fully attained. We are developing, however, toward a clearer apprehension of our interracial and international obligations. Much still remains to be thought, to be felt, and to be done. We as a nation have established a tradition of fair dealing with other nations. It must not only be maintained in the same spirit as that which characterizes our relations with Cuba, or with China—as in the return to that country of our indemnity fund—but we must also endeavor to discern our responsibility and to interpret it in the light of the larger events and the greater needs of the world.

It is perhaps not necessary to urge the necessity of expressing an active sympathy and assistance as regards those who at present are overwhelmed by the disaster of the European war. To help at such a time as this is not merely a duty—it is an instinct. And our country has responded to the call which has come across the sea in a manner so prompt, so generous, so altogether admirable, as clearly to reveal the great heart of the western world. The need of suffering humanity is to-day bringing America and Europe nearer together. Not only has our heart been touched, but our imagination has been so stimulated that we do not find it difficult to recognize the foreigner as our brother. In a very vivid sense we are conscious that we too are carrying the burden of the world's misery. There is certainly no room for national complacency, no occasion for national congratulation, because we are free from the great war's toll of life and of possessions. We, too, feel constrained to go down into the valley of the shadow of death with our brother; for the shadow which has fallen upon the old world is upon the new also.

After this war is concluded and the day of peace begins to dawn there must immediately follow a period of reconstruction

—not only a reconstruction of material resources, but also a reorganization of the fundamental ideas and purposes of life. Our part must necessarily be a large one, for we must lend our strength to the nations weakened by the ravages of war. We can no longer claim that we are freed from the complications of Old World affairs, and from all responsibility concerning them, because of our isolation. The separation of the two continents is not wholly measured by space, but by time as well, and that time has been so enormously decreased, and communication has been made such an immediate affair, that we can no longer feel that we in America live in a world of our own. We are passing through times in which the spirit and temper of great peoples are being tried as by fire, and we must appreciate the fact that as a nation we must do our part in the great endeavor to save the soul of the world and establish the things which remain. In Europe the continuity of civilization for the time being has been interrupted. Industry, commerce, art, science, literature, education, international intercourse, have been checked or have ceased altogether. The flower of young manhood, the hope and the promise of the coming generation, have been sacrificed. Light has given place to darkness, life to death. Much that has been gained in centuries of progress has been irreparably lost. All the forces of civilization which make for peace and prosperity and the joy of life continue, however, here in America unbroken and undiminished.

We hold in our hands the threads of the past and of the future; not one of them is broken. There is therefore a peculiar obligation resting upon us to conserve these treasures of human creation which make for peace and the welfare of mankind. After these days of desolation have passed there is need of a new heaven and a new earth. The world must become better; and it is our privilege as well as our duty to put forth every effort to make it better. Therefore, in this period of anxiety and uncertainty it would be well for us consciously and seriously to consider how we may better prepare ourselves for the task which will surely devolve upon us: the labor of building anew the world.

There is certainly need at this time of transition that we should establish a new scale of values in our estimate of life. We have become, during the past generation particularly, too prone to estimate the reality of all values in terms of that which we can weigh or measure or count. But material standards are not sufficient to express those values which possess supreme worth.

Even in the handling of material things in the midst of a world of practical business affairs we must set for ourselves some standard which in itself is not material. In the throes of its new birth the world to-day needs a new industrial conscience, a new sense of social responsibility, a new standard of national integrity. We must realize that the strength of a nation lies ultimately not in its natural resources, or in its methods of efficiency, or in its numerical superiority, or in its army or navy, but in its moral and spiritual vigor. All of us are one in our desire to have peace, peace universal and permanent which will dominate the world, but it is impossible to command peace or to seek peace as such directly. We can secure peace only by striving to realize in our lives the things which make for peace. It is not a matter of resolution, but of consecration. If we seek righteousness and cause it to prevail in the world, peace will inevitably follow.

It is no light task; and that we may be prepared for the opportunity when it comes we must be willing to submit ourselves to the discipline of self-restraint. We must learn to endure hardness and to simplify our mode of living. It is not merely that we as a people have enjoyed too much ease and too great luxury, but we have sacrificed too much for this luxury and this ease. We need the strength that is born of self-denial. We should be ashamed to waste our time and energy in profitless pursuits while our brothers are agonizing in this death struggle of the nations; ashamed also to waste our money or indulge ourselves in unnecessary expenditure while our brothers are starving and destitute. In spite of the noise of battle, a sacred stillness has fallen upon the world which we even in our pleasures must both recognize and respect. It is necessary also to appreciate that the work before the coming generation is to be in a new day, a day of larger opportunity, of more exacting demands, of heavier burdens. Only the strong man will be adequate to the task. If he is to be ready when the call comes there must be a fine tempering of his soul. It is a matter not only of efficiency or of skill, but of the living sources of power.

It may be urged that the duty to which I am referring is exceedingly indefinite. That may be true, because the highest order of duty is always indefinite. The supreme responsibility which rests upon us all is that of discovering for ourselves the duty which marks the line of greatest possible service. I believe that the will to serve will always find the way.

The coming generation, which is to make new history for the new world, may well pledge "The Day" with all eagerness and enthusiasm—that day when they will be called upon to realize the sublime idea of patriotic devotion, the nation for the world's service. It is true of nations as of individuals that the greatest must become servant of all. A man will serve his country according to the degree and extent of the idea which he has conceived of his country's mission and destiny in ministering to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual needs of the world at large. The greatest achievements of the greatest nations have been their international contributions to the treasures of human thought and human feeling irrespective of race traditions or national frontiers. Greece, Rome, Italy, France, England, Germany, are great not by might nor by power, but by virtue of their philosophy, their art, their law, their religion, their science, and their literature; by all the discoveries and inventions of the mind of man which have increased the dimensions of human life in its length and breadth and depth. What they have done exclusively for themselves passes away; what they have done for the world remains. For a nation to place all peoples of all lands under a debt of conscious obligation because of her service to humanity, to send forth light from her high places to illumine the earth, to realize within herself that righteousness which exalteth a nation, to champion the cause of justice, and to sacrifice the glory of conquest for the reign of universal peace—this is indeed to conquer the world. And happy are they who have a part in it.

JOHN GRIER HIBBEN.